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Top Double Agent?

The Soviet Union has the most effective intelligence network the world has ever seen. But the Russian spies and counter-spies reportedly are pretty nervous about the activities of Col. Vladimir F. Penkovsky, who was executed last week for selling Soviet secrets to the West.

Penkovsky admitted peddling scientific and economic secrets to American and British agents, but he publicly claimed they weren't matters of any great importance. He was convicted, along with a British businessman. The Russians also accused five American and five British diplomats of participation in the same spy ring.

According to James E. Warner of the New York Herald-Tribune News Service, Penkovsky was selling secrets of the most damaging kind. Warner quotes anonymous intelligence experts that Penkovsky was one of the top men in the Soviet intelligence system, and that he was acting as a double agent. That's a fellow who works within one nation's intelligence organization and describes its people and activities to agents of another nation. If this is true, the United States and Britain may have learned much about the intelligence network that is attempting to unearth our top secrets.

Warner says the Kremlin has summoned at least 300 of its top intelligence agents back to Moscow for "consultation." He says the assemblage represents all military attaches and civilian operatives who have had any contact at any time anywhere in the world with Penkovsky.

The U.S. government doesn't talk about its intelligence efforts. The budget of the Central Intelligence Agency — reportedly a whopping one—is kept secret from all but a handful of congressmen. Sometimes we get the impression that the Russians are doing all the spying, and that the United States is a passive victim.

It's encouraging to note that the United States may be playing this mysterious and vitally important game with considerable skill. For what you don't know can hurt you plenty in the world of today.

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